

Remarks by Kurt M. Campbell
Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs
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ASSISTANT SECRETARY CAMPBELL: Thank you very much for joining us this morning. I'm here with our ambassador from the United States to the Kingdom of Thailand. I'm here on a visit throughout Southeast Asia, in advance of President Obama's visit to the region next week, conveying best wishes and listening carefully to the advice and the counsel of our good friends throughout the region. I've just had a chance to meet with the Prime Minister and his team. Later, I'll be meeting with opposition members here in Thailand. The United States conveys just a very simple message. First of all, we are the strongest possible partners and friends of Thailand and we support this country completely. We know that this is a difficult period that the country is living through currently, and we are expressing a strong view that we want the next few days to be conducted in a peaceful way. We are urging restraint and we want very much for issues that are passionate, and important political matters, to be dealt with in an appropriate way through the electoral process and through other democratic institutions. We appreciate very much the opportunity to meet with senior leaders and to make the case for conducting the domestic affairs inside the country in that way. I'm happy to take a few questions and again I thank you all for coming today.

QUESTION: Sir, could we ask about your reaction to further news out of Myanmar yesterday that they were annulling the result of the 1990 election? What's your reaction to that?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY CAMPBELL: We're very disappointed and we are concerned. It's very regrettable. I think you will have seen yesterday that there was a statement at the State Department about what we have seen. Obviously we will continue to consult closely with our allies and friends in the region in terms of next steps. But this is not what we hoped for and it is a setback.

QUESTION: President Obama obviously tried a new approach with Myanmar, much more of an engagement with them. To what extent does this knock that back? To what extent does this perhaps demand a rethink of that kind of approach?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY CAMPBELL: I do think it's important to underscore that the review that was undertaken in the United States made clear that in the current situation that we needed to continue with sanctions and a very clear policy that supported our principals and our larger strategic interests. I think we will continue to want to have a dialogue with the leaders, the opposition and others inside the country. I think that is in the best interests of the region and the United States, but also allows us to pass on very consequential messages on issues of concern, both human rights issues associated with violence inside the country against ethnic groups and the like. It also allows us to talk directly to the government about issues of great concern, proliferation concerns and the like. Overall, the U.S. approach was to try to encourage domestic dialogue between the key stakeholders, and the recent promulgation of the election criteria doesn't leave much room for such a dialogue. So as I said, we're disappointed. Thank you all very much. I appreciate the chance.

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